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ABSTRACT

The overarching mission of the Child Trends organization is to improve the lives of children and families by providing research-based information to inform policies and programs affecting children's lives. This annual report details the organization's accomplishments for the year 2002. The report begins with a letter from the president and the board chair describing how the organization's research both confirms and challenges common perceptions related to children and generates new and surprising knowledge that can inform family life, public policy, and service delivery. The letter also accentuates the need for research on children during times of national uncertainty. Following introductory remarks, the report then presents a sample of recent work directed at: (1) supporting efforts to enhance school readiness, including evaluating South Carolina's First Steps program and providing information on indicators for the First 5 California program; (2) promoting positive youth development, including identifying promising youth development approaches and programs, and monitoring outcomes for participants in local youth programs; (3) advancing the use of indicators to monitor child well-being, including collecting state-level data on children to gauge the success of welfare reform; and (4) informing the public about critical trends and issues affecting children through an online data resource, web site and listserv, print research briefs and special reports, and media outreach. The report concludes with lists of recent Child Trends publications and additional publications with Child Trends authors, and lists of board of directors, executive staff, national advisory board members, major funders, and Child Trends staff. (Contains 14 endnotes.) (KB)

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Child TRENDS

2002 ANNUAL REPORT

Improving the lives of children and their families

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From the President and Board Chair

The theme of this annual report – improving the lives of children and their families – is taken from the Child Trends mission statement, which was formally approved by the Board of Directors in 2002:

> *Child Trends is dedicated to improving the lives of children by conducting research and providing science-based information to improve the decisions, programs, and policies that affect children.*

This report describes and, indeed, celebrates our efforts to carry out this mission. Increasingly, policy makers, service providers, the media, foundations, and the general public have come to look to Child Trends for accurate, relevant, unbiased information on children, youth, and families.

One question we are sometimes asked as we conduct our research is whether we are just documenting or validating things people already know or whether we are uncovering things that are new or surprising. The answer is: both.

In some cases, our research does confirm common perceptions, and we believe that this confirmation is a necessary role for research to play. For example, many people pay lip service to the idea that children are better off when they are raised by two parents rather than just one. In fact, studies conducted at Child Trends and elsewhere consistently find that, on average, children thrive best in a family headed by two biological parents in a low-conflict marriage. This research is informing the current policy debate on marriage. Moreover, the research confirms the critical role that parents play in their children's lives. Even during adolescence, when some parents might come to doubt their own influence, the research clearly validates the central importance of caring and involved parents to the development of children.

Other research *does* challenge common perceptions. Work by Child Trends and colleagues on the implications of welfare reform for children is an example of this kind of breakthrough information. Many people on the left of the political spectrum thought that the 1996 welfare reform would be *terrible*, and that it would be terrible for children, while those on the right thought welfare reform would be *wonderful*, and that it would be wonderful for children. Child Trends' research suggests that the reality is much more in the middle. Most of the impacts of welfare reform for children are neutral, but there are some effects – both positive and negative – for some

subgroups. Among teens, for instance, most impacts are neutral, but when there are impacts, they are generally negative (more behavior problems, for example.) Again, this finding was unexpected because it had been anticipated that preschool children would be affected the most when their mothers entered the work force in the wake of welfare reform.

The question of when and where teens first have sex is another example of Child Trends' research that is generating new and surprising knowledge. Although it has been found that delinquent activity is more likely during the after-school hours, data had never been collected on when teens first have sex. So Child Trends designed a set of questions for the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. The data came back indicating that this first sexual experience is more often at night, and it generally takes place either at the teen's own home or in the home of the teen's partner – perhaps while the parents are at home. This unexpected result from the survey prompted extensive media coverage (and a new set of worries for parents).

These examples represent both specific findings and broad findings that can serve to inform family life, public policy, and service delivery. At the same time, they reinforce the ongoing value of research and communication work by Child Trends to produce and disseminate such information.

This valuable work is especially important during these difficult times. With a sluggish economy affecting the assets of foundations and the budgets of governments alike, and with homeland security and international challenges foremost in the minds of every citizen, research on children might seem a luxury. It isn't. It is as essential as it ever was, and, indeed, during this period of national uncertainty, it is perhaps even more essential. That old cliché still holds true: Children *are* the future. Anything that can be done to improve that future speaks well for the long-term prognosis of this nation. Research can provide the vital guidance along the way.

In closing, we dedicate this annual report to Child Trends staff members. Hard working, insightful, dedicated to research rigor, and concerned with enhancing the lives of children, especially the most vulnerable children in our society, they are good people doing good work. Each and every day, their contributions are making a strong organization stronger.

Kristin Anderson Moore, Ph.D.
President and Senior Scholar

Ann B. Schnare, Ph.D.
Board Chair

May 2003

Introduction

The overarching mission of Child Trends is to improve the lives of children and their families. To advance this mission, we collect and analyze data; conduct, synthesize, and disseminate research; and monitor and evaluate programs in order to provide research-based information and insights to inform decision making that affects children.

In this annual report, we will illustrate how Child Trends is carrying out its mission as we provide some specific examples of our recent work directed at:

— Supporting efforts to enhance school readiness,
— Promoting positive youth development,
— Advancing the use of indicators to monitor child well-being, and
— Informing the public about critical trends and issues affecting children.

Because our research portfolio is diverse and growing, the examples we highlight should be considered representative of our work, rather than a comprehensive accounting or a "laundry list." As a research organization, we have sought to produce a report that touches not only on what we have done, but also on what we have found and learned. Highlights from these research findings over the past year form the core of this document.

A full listing of Child Trends' research areas, projects, and products can be found on our Web site, ***www.childtrends.org***.

Supporting Efforts to Enhance School Readiness

Evaluating the First Steps of South Carolina's *First Steps*

In recent years, Child Trends has built a national reputation as a leading source of research-based information about the developmental requirements for children to enter school ready to succeed. As a result, a number of communities across the country have turned to Child Trends for expert advice in developing, implementing, and evaluating their school readiness efforts. The state of South Carolina, for example, hired Child Trends to evaluate the implementation of the first three years of its comprehensive initiative, *First Steps to School Readiness*.

To accomplish this task, a Child Trends research team spent much of 2002 interviewing *First Steps* directors in all 46 counties, as well as state and county officials; making site visits to *First Steps*-funded programs; reviewing reports and background papers; and analyzing data from multiple sources – from surveys of parents to fiscal management databases. By the end of 2002, the team had produced a detailed evaluation report,[1] an executive summary highlighting the most salient points of the evaluation, and profiles of the young child population and *First Steps* initiatives in each of South Carolina's 46 counties. Representatives from Child Trends[2] and *First Steps* officially presented this material to the state legislature on January 2, 2003.

The intent of the evaluation, in essence, was to assess the accomplishments made by *First Steps* in its short history and the challenges it still faces. What did the Child Trends research team find? Its overall assessment found that the early implementation of *First Steps* was indeed in keeping both with the intent of the legislation that gave birth to the initiative and with research and information on effective child development practices. For example, the evaluators noted that:

— All of the administrative structures called for by the legislation were in place and programs of each type called for in the legislation (e.g., early childhood education, health, parent education and family strengthening, and child care initiatives) were in operation.

— The state saw an increase in communication and collaboration across agencies, organizations, and individuals that focus on the needs of young children and their families.

— *First Steps* had adhered to a set of guiding principles that are supported by research in early childhood development, and *First Steps* had drawn on

these principles in designing and implementing its programs. An example of one of these principles suggests that children's school readiness involves multiple dimensions of development, including early literacy, cognitive development, social and emotional development, and health.

As for the challenges facing *First Steps* as it moves forward, members of the Child Trends research team emphasized:

— The need to put a greater focus on program quality in light of evidence showing wide variations in program quality across the state and even within counties,

— The need to strengthen and streamline data collection at all levels in the interest of ensuring ongoing program accountability, and

— The need to address the adequacy of resources to ensure that *First Steps* is truly able to make a fundamental change overall in children's school readiness – especially for South Carolina's most disadvantaged preschoolers.

"A number of communities across the country have turned to Child Trends for expert advice in developing, implementing, and evaluating their school readiness efforts."

Now that *First Steps* has been implemented, there will be a future need to collect data on child and family outcomes – that is, on how well or how poorly children are doing in South Carolina.

Providing Background on School Readiness Measures for *First 5 California*

California voters passed Proposition 10 in 1998. The initiative – now called *First 5 California* – added a tax of 50 cents per pack on cigarettes to fund programs to promote early childhood development. The initiative is directed at ensuring that every child in every county in the state enters school physically and emotionally healthy and ready to reach his or her greatest potential. It specifically targets children ages five and younger (including those in the prenatal stage).

As a way to inform policies, program development, and decisions about funding, the California Children and Families Commission, which is overseeing the initiative, is developing a results-based accountability system. This system tracks progress in four broad areas that affect children's readiness to learn: maternal and child health, child development, family functioning, and service systems. The Commission contracted with SRI

International, a California-based research firm, to design evaluation activities to support this results-based accountability. SRI and Child Trends have been working together to provide background information on a provisional set of indicators (statistical markers) – 104 in all – that counties could use to track progress on their desired results.

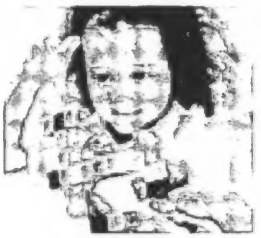
What are some of these indicators? Here are some examples, one for each broad area:

— To measure improved child health: *the number and percentage of children zero to five years of age who are in the expected range of weight for their height and age.*

— To measure improved child development: *the number and percentage of children entering kindergarten who are ready for school, as determined by assessments completed by teachers and parents to indicate that the child is ready in the areas of cognitive, social, emotional, and language development; approaches to learning; and health and physical development.*

— To measure improved family functioning: *the number and percentage of families that report reading or telling stories regularly to their children, three to five years of age.*

— To measure improved service systems: *increasing outreach and public awareness of services for preschool children and their families.*



Over the past year, Child Trends researchers provided information on why each of such indicators was important to identify within the context of *First 5 California*, how you would actually go about collecting the information, and what the relative ease or difficulty might be for obtaining it. For example, was the indicator something that could come out of a state database, or would it involve having to survey parents for the information? Interviewing parents to ferret out information on child abuse and neglect, for instance, is notoriously difficult.

The result of Child Trends' work with SRI in this area was a 550-page background book,[3] which was published in August 2002. This book has helped California counties to develop a condensed list of indicators that they will use to track and measure the progress of *First 5 California* in their own jurisdictions. In 2002, Child Trends' research team began planning its next major task for *First 5 California*: working with SRI on the actual assessment to determine whether California's youngest citizens *are* ready for kindergarten. Child Trends researchers will be helping to design a

questionnaire for use in this evaluation. Preliminary plans call for gathering information on school readiness by using questionnaires for parents and teachers and direct interviews for children.

Promoting Positive Youth Development

Identifying What Works to Improve Teens' Prospects in Life

All over the country, well-intentioned people have set up programs to promote the positive development of young people, and often these programs are very popular. But do they work? That question served as the impetus for a major research project that Child Trends conducted in 2001 and 2002 with funding from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

The Foundation asked Child Trends to help identify promising youth development approaches and programs for the 26 communities across the nation that the Foundation has targeted for special support. To determine what works to improve youth well-being, Child Trends undertook a comprehensive study of the many contributing influences that lead to positive (and negative) teen behaviors in seven areas[4] and of programs that seek to enhance development in these areas. This undertaking, the result of a careful selection process, involved tracking down and analyzing more than 1,100 research articles. Only studies that met Child Trends' criteria for research rigor "made the grade."

"Child Trends undertook a comprehensive study of the many contributing influences that lead to positive (and negative) teen behaviors in seven areas and of programs that seek to enhance development in these areas."

A number of key themes emerged across all these research studies.[5] One primary finding – "that relationships matter" – is supported by this evidence:

— *Parent-child relationships are vital to adolescent well-being.* Over and over again, research confirms that teens who have warm, involved, and satisfying relationships with their parents have better outcomes (such as better academic achievement and fewer behavior problems) than those who do not.

— *Siblings, teachers, and other adults and mentors can provide additional support.* Research also shows that brothers and sisters can act as positive models for behaviors, such as physical activity and avoidance of drug use. And mentoring relationships, *when they are positive and sustained,* can enhance teens' growth and development.

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— *Peer influences are important and can be positive.* Contrary to stereotype, research suggests that adolescents often influence each other positively, by either modeling behaviors or by pressuring each other to behave in certain ways or to adopt certain attitudes and goals. The opposite also seems to occur. Indeed, research supports the common notion that "good kids" tend to gravitate to other kids who are developing well and "bad kids" tend to gravitate to other kids who are experiencing difficulties.

Other themes that emerged from this body of research apply more directly to program development. For example:

— *View teens as whole people.* Teens are multidimensional; they aren't just students, or athletes, or patients, or delinquents, for example. Moreover, there are many factors[6] in their lives that influence their behavior. Those designing programs for adolescents might weigh this perspective as the programs decide on the array of services and activities to offer.

— *Engage young people.* Experimental evaluations show repeatedly that programs that lecture to teens from "on high" fail to change their behavior but that programs that build relationships, that truly involve adolescents, and that provide well-implemented and structured activities can generate successful change.

Child Trends researchers synthesized findings from the Knight project in long reports, in a collection of research briefs, and in electronic "What Works" tables posted on the Child Trends Web site, ***www.childtrends.org***. This project complements the work that Child Trends has done for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation on program approaches and youth outcomes (described in last year's annual report and available on our Web site). In 2002, Child Trends researchers began laying the groundwork for a new study for the Clark Foundation on youth development programs geared toward older youth (16 to 24) who are not in school. This study will be finalized in 2003.

Monitoring Outcomes for Participants in Local Youth Programs

It's only fitting that Child Trends' commitment to improve the lives of children should be demonstrated on the local as well as on the national stage. A prime example is the working relationship forged between Child Trends and the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation. The quasi-governmental nonprofit corporation funds 69 programs for youth in the nation's capital. Of these, 8 are early childhood programs, 48 are after-school programs serving children and youth ages 5 to 17, and 13 are youth entrepreneurship programs serving teens over the age of 13.

The DC Trust asked Child Trends to assist with monitoring outcomes for participants in these programs. Do participants in the Trust's after-school and entrepreneurship programs show improved grades, test scores, and school attendance? Is participation associated with increases in enrollment in GED and other educational programs and decreases in criminal behavior and teen pregnancy? Do parents whose children are enrolled in the Trust's early childhood programs show a greater understanding of the importance of child literacy and learning and of what their children need in order to be ready for school?

"It's only fitting that Child Trends' commitment to improve the lives of children should be demonstrated on the local as well as on the national stage."

To monitor its investment in these programs, the Trust identified some important questions. In the summer of 2001, in order to provide the answers, Child Trends researchers prepared several reports that reviewed the research literature on the importance of youth development programs for young people.[7]

One year later, in the summer of 2002, Child Trends conducted a pilot study that focused on two sites for each of the three types of Trust youth development programs. The study was based on survey data collected from questionnaires filled out by youths (in the case of the after-school and entrepreneurship programs) or completed by a parent (in the case of the early childhood education programs). Information was also collected from academic records provided by participants (for those enrolled in school). Child Trends researchers designed the questionnaires, which were printed in English, Spanish, Vietnamese, and Mandarin Chinese; visited the sites to explain the study and to obtain permission from parents for their children to participate in the study; and have now begun to analyze the data.

In its reports to the Trust[8] and building on the experience of the pilot study, Child Trends researchers also made recommendations for future rounds of data collection.

Advancing the Use of Indicators to Improve Child Well-Being

Collecting State-Level Data on Children to Gauge the Success of Welfare Reform

Both the Bush Administration's welfare reauthorization proposal and the welfare reauthorization bill passed by the House of Representatives in 2002 make child well-being "the overarching goal" of welfare reform policy. And, of course, child well-being is integral to many government programs ranging from child abuse and neglect programs to nutrition programs. However, many of these programs are managed by the states, and information to monitor children's well-being at the state level is quite limited. To explore ways to fill this data gap, Child Trends has been instrumental in opening a dialogue about the value of developing state-level data on child well-being to track how well children are doing, especially low-income children.

"Child Trends has been instrumental in opening a dialogue about the value of developing state-level data on child well-being to track how well children are doing, especially low-income children."

Child Trends researchers developed an illustrative list of indicators that could be used to measure child well-being (in areas such as education, social and emotional development, health and safety, and family well-being).[9] In addition, in March 2002, Child Trends President, Dr. Kristin Anderson Moore, joined with several colleagues[10] to develop briefing papers[11] sketching out the idea of a comprehensive, ongoing system of indicators of child well-being that could be used for this purpose at the national and state level.

What might such a tracking system look like?

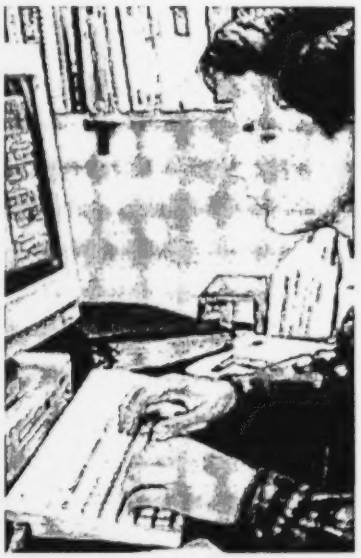
— It would include indicators about *all* children – not just poor children – but would include an "oversampling" (larger numbers) of low-income children, thus making it easier for research to be conducted on this important population. These children would be most affected by welfare reform, most often served by programs, and most at risk for poor developmental outcomes.

— It would focus on children of all ages. Early on, for example, researchers worried about how preschoolers would be affected when their mothers moved from welfare to work. But some of the early results from studies show that negative consequences are more frequent (though still infrequent) among adolescents. Accordingly, we want to make sure that we monitor children at different developmental stages: babies, school-age children, and adolescents.

— It would monitor a broad array of outcomes. Instead of focusing just on teen pregnancy or school dropout, for example, it would look at multiple outcomes in areas such as education, social and emotional development, and health and safety.

— It would use indicators that are consistent across the states, thereby allowing for comparisons *across* as well as *within* states. Although welfare reform and other *legislation* are at the federal level, *policies* that affect children are often being implemented at the state level. Hence, it would be valuable to monitor children's well-being so that trends can be tracked and compared at the state level.

— It would include information about families as well as about children, but the emphasis still would be on children.



Dr. Moore and her colleagues have been invited by a wide range of people to share information about the value of using child well-being indicators to monitor the success of welfare reform and other policies and programs. This list includes the staffs of key members of Congress on both sides of the political aisle, Administration officials, and other researchers. The idea has added to the increasingly widespread interest and discussion about monitoring child outcomes at the state level.

Increasing the Visibility of the Child Welfare Population

The media report regularly on shocking cases of foster children who have met some terrible fate either when placed in foster care that was supposed to protect them from harm, or when they returned to their own homes following such placement. But beyond these sensational cases, very little is known about the day-to-day existence of children in the child welfare population, many of whom have been victimized by child abuse and neglect prior to their placement.

Among children who are in foster care or who have received services at home through the child welfare system, how many have chronic disabilities that affect their school performance? How are they doing in school? How many have mental health or substance abuse problems or other risk factors that would affect their ability to make a successful transition from adolescence to adulthood? How many are the children of teen parents? How many are sexually active? Collecting and analyzing such data, or *indicators of child well-being* to be more precise, can provide a portrait of what the child welfare population looks like. At present, that portrait is largely unfinished.

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Currently, children in the child welfare population are often treated as "cases," and the children are tracked in terms of the quantity and quality of services that they receive. But there's little tracking of how well or how poorly the children themselves are actually doing. Moreover, the data that exist do not lend themselves to making comparisons or connections between the child welfare population and other vulnerable child groups, which would provide valuable information for policy makers and service providers.

Child Trends is working to remedy this situation. With support from the Doris Duke Charitable Foundation, Child Trends researchers have launched several efforts to build awareness about the role that indicators of child well-being can play in making the characteristics and needs of this population more visible to the public at large. The motivation fueling these efforts is to improve the capacity of government – at the local, state, and national levels – to serve children in the child welfare population and to do so with greater effectiveness.

"Collecting and analyzing indicators of child well-being can provide a portrait of what the child welfare population looks like. At present, that portrait is largely unfinished."

To encourage further dialogue and to inform policy and practice about these issues, Child Trends researchers have taken several concrete steps over the past year, including:

— Convening the first meeting of the Child Trends Consortium on Child Well-Being Indicators for Child Welfare Populations,[12] which includes representatives from child welfare agencies, university-based and independent research centers, the judicial system, and pediatric medicine. The group is reviewing child well-being indicators in existing child health and development surveys, exploring ways to incorporate these indicators into the data collection efforts of child welfare and child protective services agencies, considering new indicators that might be added, and highlighting examples of communities that have made gains in improving the quality of data collection and analysis in this area.

— Publishing a widely circulated research brief[13] (with an initial distribution of almost 8,000) that summarized available data and recent research on the consequences of child abuse and neglect for victims and that discussed the value of using indicators of well-being to assess and monitor outcomes for these vulnerable children.

— Building links to child welfare and media representatives to discuss these issues.[14]

— Developing data guides to present the most important national- and state-level data on child protection and child welfare in accessible one-page formats. Work on these guides began in 2002, with publication slated for 2003.

Informing the Public about Critical Trends and Issues Affecting Children

Research without dissemination brings to mind that familiar saying, "If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?" Child Trends is committed to making sure that a broad public "hears" the "sound" of our research. Over the past year, with support from several foundations, we have accelerated our efforts to bring the knowledge that Child Trends and other researchers have generated to those individuals and groups who will find this information useful in addressing the needs of children and their families. We have increased our resolve to translate our research findings and insights into language that is accessible to nonresearchers, while not compromising the integrity of the science, and we have continued to introduce new formats and products. It's been a challenge but one that has had marked success. Below are highlights from our dissemination activities.

"Research without dissemination brings to mind that familiar saying, 'If a tree falls in the forest and there is no one there to hear it, does it make a sound?' Child Trends is committed to making sure that a broad public 'hears' the 'sound' of our research."

Child Trends DataBank

A long-held dream became a reality on June 29, 2002, when Child Trends launched the Child Trends DataBank, ***www.childtrendsdatabank.org***. Our online resource makes the latest information on trends affecting children instantly available to the media and the general public. Want to know how many children there are in the United States and what the racial and ethnic breakdown is? Or how many children are overweight compared to 20 years ago? Or how many children are in poverty? Or how many teens carry guns? Or how many teens volunteer regularly? Or how many hours children are watching TV these days? Or how the church-going rate of black teens compares with that of white teens?

The DataBank makes such information instantly accessible with just the click of a mouse. Continuously updated, these facts inspired *USA Today* to designate the DataBank as a "hot site" on a "Web Guide" column it published a month after the DataBank was launched. In its first full month of operation, 20,000 people visited the site. The number of monthly visitors grew throughout the year, increasing by about 25 percent to 26,500 by January 2003.

The DataBank made its debut with 70 indicators of child well-being and is steadily adding others while updating original entries, a pattern that will continue in 2003. Along with the most current statistics culled from government reports or tabulated especially for the DataBank, the site features graphics and tables, as well as brief literature reviews that provide background on national trends and patterns. All information is designed to be downloaded and easily printed.

A Journalist Welcomes the DataBank

Charles Bowen, a columnist for Editor & Publisher, the self-described "authoritative weekly magazine covering the newspaper industry in North America," wrote about the Child Trends DataBank in the September 17, 2002, issue of the magazine:

> *Now that we have plunged headlong into another school year, it's not only the children, parents, and teachers who are scurrying around. Take a look at your education reporter. Always hungry for new ideas and for novel approaches to those annual school-bells-are-ringing stories, the seasoned writers on the nation's education beats again have begun scouring the Internet for something fresh about young people. And just in time, a new site on the Web offers one-stop surfing for all kind of statistics relating to children and teens... Provided by Child Trends, a national leader in the field for more than two decades, the Child Trends DataBank covers education, health, income, family and more.*

And more praise came later in the article: *"With such a rich reservoir of information, you'd hope for a good search engine on the site, and it has one."*

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Web Site and Listserv

For the general public, the Child Trends Web site, ***www.childtrends.org***, remains the major portal to information generated by Child Trends researchers. In 2002, Child Trends made several enhancements to the site. The addition of point-and-click "What Works" tables present research-based information on what kinds of programs, policies, and practices have been found to promote positive youth development (and what kinds have not). The publications section of the site was also redesigned to make it easier for users to browse, view, download, and purchase publications. Child Trends has begun a redesign of the entire site.

During 2002, the Child Trends Web site received almost 400,000 visitors. The site has generated fan mail from individuals, plus several awards. Child Trends' listserv, an electronic "announcement," both complements the Web site and serves as one entrance into it. In 2002, the listserv had 6,000 subscribers, an approximate increase of 20 percent over 2001. To be added to the listserv, just go to the Child Trends Web site.

Kudos for the Child Trends Web Site

In 2002, the Web site received a five-star rating from the Family WebGuide, *www.cfw.tufts.edu*, a project of Tufts University. The WebGuide reviews Web sites providing information on children and families for content, authority, stability, and ease of use. Five stars is the highest rating a site can get.

The site also received the "Adding Wisdom Merit Award" from Parent to Parent, *www.parenttoparent.com*, a syndicated parenting column, and it earned an "A" rating from Education World, www.education-world.com, an Internet resource for teachers.

Research Briefs

In 1999, Child Trends began publishing a research brief series as a vehicle to introduce research findings about children and their families to policy makers, program designers, opinion leaders, the media, and the public at large. Last year, we produced 15 briefs – the greatest number of any year since we began publication – on topics ranging from religiosity to poverty to foster care. These briefs continue to generate plaudits from the research community and from readers across the political spectrum. Many of these

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briefs have attracted extensive media coverage. For example, *Parenting* magazine wrote about "Family Strengths: Often Overlooked, But Real" in a December 2002/January 2003 article headlined "The Good News about Families." And a *Baltimore Sun* columnist featured "Educating America's Youth: What Makes a Difference" in a September 3, 2002, article headlined "Parental Involvement Key to Teens' Success." The briefs are mailed directly to about 5,500 professionals and attract additional readers through our listserv announcements, through our Web site, and through distribution at conferences and other public events.

What People Are Saying about Child Trends' Research Briefs

"They are terrific: clear, direct, excellent analysis of the research (including concise explanations of caveats), great discussion of implications for research and policy. They are a model that we should all emulate."

— Anne Kubisch, Co-director, the Aspen Institute on Comprehensive Community Initiatives

"I find each one informative and a model of balanced reporting. I am particularly impressed with your descriptions of the importance of different research designs for understanding program impact."

— Peter Donaldson, Vice President, Population Council

"They are timely and often reflect the lives of the kids we work with – they help to inform my decision making."

— Patricia Blakely, Director of Program and Administration, White-Williams Scholars, a Philadelphia-based organization that helps low-income high school students achieve

"I would like to include this material in the curriculum. Actually, this material would be used as required reading for all of the students."

— Sylvia Carter, Coordinator, Family Service Worker Credential Project, Head Start Resource and Training Center, University of Maryland University College

"Your work keeps a spotlight on the issues affecting children. You make a difference in addressing the healthy development of children in need."

— Kip Bryant, Youth Coordinator for Employment and Training, Department of Human Services, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

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Special Reports

Much of the research produced by Child Trends is complex and generates longer reports that are directed at readers with a specific interest in a particular topic. Those published by Child Trends in 2002 include:

— *The Unfinished Business of Welfare Reform: Improving Prospects for Poor Children and Youth... Perspectives from Research.* In the report, Child Trends analyzed indicator data and the results of experimental studies to provide critical insights on how welfare reform might be affecting children. An excerpt from the report states that "The initial phase of welfare reform introduced major changes into the lives of adults. As we approach the next phase of welfare reform, Congress and the states have an opportunity to finish the task by focusing specifically and directly on the children."

— *10 Reasons to Keep the Focus on Teen Childbearing.* Bringing together national and international statistics and results from research studies, the report makes the case that, even though the birth rate among U.S. teens has declined over the past decade, the nation can't afford to drift into complacency about the problem of "children having children." A message development session led by Edelman Public Relations Worldwide for communications staff members and researchers in the area of fertility and family formation helped to shape the translation of these messages for the report. A similar message development session led by Edelman in 2001 helped Child Trends clarify its research-based messages on children and welfare reform. *10 Reasons* complemented *Facts at a Glance*, Child Trends' annual statistical newsletter on trends in teen pregnancy, teen births, and teen sexual behavior.

— *Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers in America.* While most parenting studies have focused only on mothers, this 220-page report looked at what we know about both parents, thus offering a more complete picture of family life in the United States. As described in a September 15, 2002, article in the *Chicago Tribune*, "Those who think dads get left out of the picture in parenting studies (which often find that many dads *are* out of the picture) should grab the recent 'Charting Parenthood' report. Put out by the nonpartisan research group Child Trends, it tracks everything from how dads feel about parenting to how involved they are day to day."

Media Outreach

Child Trends' outreach to the media led to extensive coverage of Child Trends research over the past year: more than 500 stories. We saw an increase in the number of reporters who called us when they were working on stories on a variety of topics related to children and families, and we built stronger ties to columnists and editorial writers. The resulting coverage wasn't limited to the print media. Television and radio featured our information and insights as well.

For example, Child Trends publications and interviews with Child Trends researchers contributed to two editorials in the *Washington Post* and to a *Wall Street Journal* column by Albert R. Hunt around the issue of children and welfare reform. The *Journal* column, which was published June 27, 2002, observed: "Child Trends, a nonpartisan research firm, has analyzed the data on welfare reform and offers a decidedly more complex picture than either champions or critics present." Another example of Child Trends' increased media exposure resulted from the provocative new finding in the 2002 *Facts at a Glance* about when and where teens report first having sex. News of the finding reached every part of the country by print, television, radio, and the Internet. The Associated Press story alone ran in 150 papers, while a *New York Times* story ran in more than 50. "Good Morning, America," "The O'Reilly Factor," "The Phil Donahue Show," and CNN's "TalkBack Live" were among the other media reporting the finding.

Widespread media coverage also followed the posting of new information on the Child Trends DataBank that showed the homicide rate for infants had increased gradually over the past 30 years and was now close to the rate for teens. Interest in this startling fact and its implications was boosted by coverage by the *Washington Post,* the *Sacramento Bee, Reuters Health,* and BBC radio. In the *Post* article, which ran on December 10, 2003, Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Laura Sessions Stepp quoted Brett V. Brown, the DataBank's director, on the significance of the finding: "Infants are the most defenseless members of our society and the most deserving of our protection. If degree of risk is going to guide our domestic policies, then when the infant homicide rate equals the teen rate, it's time for us to pay attention."

Presentations and Briefings

In keeping with Child Trends' commitment to share our research with fellow researchers and with policy makers, opinion leaders, and service providers, Child Trends researchers presented research findings and analysis before a broad array of audiences in 2002. Among these audiences were the National Academy of Sciences, the National Governors Association, the National Youth Summit sponsored by the Administration for Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; the New America Foundation; KIDS COUNT; the National Council on Family Relations; Generations United; Concerned Women for America; the American Public Human Services Association; and Grantmakers for Children, Youth, and Families. Child Trends researchers also participated in Capitol Hill briefings on mentoring and on teen pregnancy and welfare reform, and they had one-on-one and small group meetings with congressional staffers in response to requests for research-based information on a range of issues.

Afterword

We conclude this report with the same words that concluded our 2001 annual report. Their relevance endures:

> Ultimately, all of Child Trends' work is in the service of America's children. The data that we collect and analyze; the reports, briefs, articles, and news releases that we produce; the information that we post on our Web site; the presentations that we give at scholarly and public policy meetings; the collaborations that we form with other researchers and organizations; the service that we provide to foundations and government agencies; the interviews that we give to the media – all of this – is connected to our compelling mission. That mission, on its most elemental level, is to improve the lives of children and their families. The tool we use to carry out this mission is rigorous, science-based information. And the inspiration for wielding that tool is what we regard as a "self-evident" truth: *Children matter, and their well-being is intrinsically important.*

Endnotes

1 The full name of the report is *First Steps and further steps: Early outcomes and lessons learned from South Carolina's School Readiness Initiative – 1999-2002 Program evaluation;* available at www.scfirststeps.org/public/index.htm.

2 Child Trends' representative was Martha J. Zaslow, Ph.D., Senior Scholar and Vice President for Research.

3 Child Trends, & SRI International. (2002). *First 5 California: Child, family, & community indicators book.* Washington, DC: Child Trends.

4 The seven areas are educational adjustment, physical health and safety, mental health, reproductive health, emotional well-being, social skills, and citizenship.

5 Information in this section of the annual report is drawn from Moore, K., & Zaff, J. (2002). *Building a better teenager: A summary of "what works" in adolescent development* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

6 Among these factors are their family's socioeconomic status, schools, communities, the media, and public policies.

7 Bronte-Tinkew, J., & Calkins, J. (2001). *Logic models and outcomes for early childhood programs.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends; Bronte-Tinkew, J., & Calkins, J. (2001). *Logic models and outcomes for youth entrepreneurship programs.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends; Bronte-Tinkew, J., Calkins, J., Zaff, J., & Redd, Z. (2001). *Measures for outcomes in early childhood, out-of-school time, and youth entrepreneurship programs.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

8 Bronte-Tinkew, J., Moore, K., Webber, K., & Calkins, J. (2002). *Outcomes for youth in early childhood programs: Summary report of a pilot study.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends ; Bronte-Tinkew, J., Calkins, J., Moore, K., Webber, K., & Redd, Z. (2002). *Outcomes for youth in youth entrepreneurship programs: Summary report of a pilot study.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends; Zaff, J., Bronte-Tinkew, J., Moore, K., & Calkins, J. (2002). *Outcomes for youth in out-of-school time programs: Summary report of a pilot study.* (Prepared for the DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

9 For example, education indicators might include data on school attendance, expulsions, high school completion, and cognitive test scores, while social and emotional development indicators might include measures of child behavior problems, adolescent delinquency, and participation in positive activities.

10 Matthew Stagner of the Urban Institute and Shepherd Smith of the Institute for Youth Development.

11 The briefing papers "Child well-being: The overarching goal of welfare reform" and "Child well-being: The overarching goal of welfare reform... How would we know it worked?" are available from Amber Moore, Director of Outreach and Media Relations at Child Trends.

12 The meeting was held on October 11, 2002, at Child Trends. Others were scheduled for April 8 and October 10, 2003.

13 Chalk, R., Gibbons, A., & Scarupa, H.J. (2002). *The multiple dimensions of child abuse and neglect: New insights into an old problem* (Research Brief). Washington, DC: Child Trends.

14 For example, Rosemary Chalk, the director of Child Trends' Child Abuse, Neglect, and Family Violence content area, met with the Office of the Deputy Mayor of the District of Columbia and top officials of the American Public Human Services Association and the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators. She also briefed participants in the University of Maryland Journalism Fellowships in Child and Family Policy, journalism fellows convened by the Packard Center for Children and Families, and participants attending a Regional Journalism Symposium in South Carolina organized by the Annie E. Casey Journalism Center.

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2002 Child Trends Publications

*To order any publications on this list, visit the Child Trends Web site at **www.childtrends.org**.*

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL BEHAVIOR

Reproductive Health Care for America's Diverse Teen Population: A Guide for Service Providers
Child Trends
#2002-01 — $15.00

Preventing Teenage Pregnancy, Childbearing, and Sexually Transmitted Diseases: What the Research Shows (Research Brief)
Manlove, J., Humen-Terry, E., Papillo, A., Franzetta, K., Williams, S., Ryan, S.
#2002-31 — $5.00

Facts at a Glance 2002 Child Trends
#2002-50 — $5.00

Ten Reasons to Keep the Focus on Teen Childbearing (Special Report)
Child Trends
#2002-52 — $10.00

CHILD ABUSE, NEGLECT, AND FAMILY VIOLENCE

The Multiple Dimensions of Child Abuse and Neglect: New Insights into an Old Problem (Research Brief) Chalk, R., Gibbons, A., Scarupa, H.
2002-27 — $5.00

Youth Who "Age Out" of Foster Care: Troubled Lives, Troubling Prospects (Research Brief)
Wertheimer, R.
2002-59 — $5.00

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

The Right Start for America's Newborns: A Decade of City and State Trends
Wertheimer, R. O'Hare, W., Croan, T., Jager, J., Long, M., Reynolds, M.
2002-06 — $10.00

EDUCATION

School Readiness Indicator Items and Basic Measures of Progress (CD-ROM)
Calkins, J., Ling, T., Moore, E., Halle, T., Hair, E.C., Moore, K.A., Zaslow, M.
2002-18 — $15.00

Educating America's Youth: What Makes a Difference (Research Brief)
Redd, Z., Brooks, J., McGarvey, A.
2002-47 — $5.00

FAMILY STRENGTHS

Family Strengths: Often Overlooked, But Real (Research Brief)
Moore, K.A., Chalk, R., Scarpa, J., Vandivere, S.
2002-36 — $5.00

Family Strengths
Moore, K.A., Chalk, R., Scarpa, J., Vandivere, S.
2002-38 — $15.00

FATHERHOOD

Charting Parenthood: A Statistical Portrait of Fathers and Mothers in America
Child Trends
2002-05 — $30.00

INDICATORS AND STATISTICAL PROFILES

Kids Count International Data Sheet
Child Trends
2002-19 — $4.50

International Surveys of Child and Family Well-Being: An Overview
Brown, B., Smith, B., Harper, M.
2002-35 — $15.00

The Child Indicator, Vol. 4, Issue No. 1
Brown, B., Smith, B., Lippman, L., Bzostek, S.
2002-51 — $5.00

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marriage from a Child's Perspective: How Does Family Structure Affect Children, and What Can We Do about It? (Research Brief)
Moore, K.A., Jekielek, S.M., Emig, C.
2002-32 — $5.00

WELFARE AND POVERTY

Children of Current and Former Welfare Recipients: Similarly at Risk (Research Brief)
Tout, K., Scarpa, J., Zaslow, M.J.
2002-03 — $5.00

The Unfinished Business of Welfare Reform: Improving Prospects for Poor Children and Youth. Prospectives from Research (Special Report)
Child Trends
2002-28 — $10.00

Children in Poverty: Trends, Consequences and Policy Options (Research Brief)
Moore, K.A., Redd, Z.
2002-54 — $5.00

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YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Mentoring Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis
Jekielek, S., Moore, K.A., Hair, E.C.
2002-08 — $15.00

Civic Engagement Programs and Youth Development: A Synthesis
Michelsen, E., Zaff, J.F., Hair, E.C.
2002-09 — $15.00

Academic Achievement Programs in Youth Development: A Synthesis
Redd, Z., Cochran, S., Hair, E.C., Moore, K.A.
2002-10 — $15.00

Employment Initiatives and Youth Development: A Synthesis
Jekielek, S., Cochran, S., Hair, E.C.
2002-11 — $15.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Positive Reproductive Health in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors: Executive Summary and Report
Manlove, J., Terry-Humen, E. Papillo, A.R., Franzetta, K., Williams, S., Ryan, S.
2002-12 — $20.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Positive Citizenship in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors: Executive Summary and Report
Zaff, J.F., Michelsen, E.
2002-13 — $20.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Educational Adjustment in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors: Executive Summary and Report
Redd, Z., Brooks, J., McGarvey, A.
2002-14 — $20.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Mental Health and Externalizing Disorders in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors: Executive Summary and Report
Zaff, J.F., Calkins, J.
2002-15 — $20.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Physical Health and Safety in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors: Executive Summary and Report
Hatcher, J.L., Scarpa, J.
2002-16 — $20.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Emotional Well-being in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors
Bridges, L.J., Margie, N.G., Zaff, J.F.
2002-17 — $20.00

Mentoring: A Promising Strategy for Youth Development (Research Brief)
Jekielek, S.M., Moore, K.A., Hair, E.C., Scarupa, H.J.
2002-21 — $5.00

Background for Community-Level Work on Social Competence in Adolescence: Reviewing the Literature on Contributing Factors
Hair, E.C., Jager, J., Garrett, S.B.
2002-30 — $20.00

Encouraging Teens to Adopt A Safe, Health Lifestyle: A Foundation for Improving Future Adult Behaviors (Research Brief)
Hatcher, J., Scarpa, J.
2002-33 — $5.00

Helping Teens Develop Health Social Skills and Relationships: What the Research Shows About Navigating Adolescence (Research Brief)
Hair, E.C., Jager, J., Garrett, S.B.
2002-37 — $5.00

Religion and Spirituality in Childhood and Adolescence
Bridges, L.J., Moore, K.A.
2002-39 — $15.00

Religious Involvement and Children's Well-Being: What Research Tells Us (And What It Doesn't) (Research Brief)
Bridges, L.J., Moore, K.A.
2002-48 — $5.00

Promoting Positive Mental and Emotional Health in Teens: Some Lessons from Research (Research Brief)
Zaff, J., Caulkins, J., Bridges, L., Margie, N.G.
2002-49 — $5.00

Promoting Well-being Among America's Teens: An Executive Summary of Adolescent Development Research Reviews Completed for the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
Zaff, J.F., Moore, K.A.
2002-53 — $7.50

Encouraging Civic Engagement: How Teens Are (or Are Not) Becoming Responsible Citizens (Research Brief)
Zaff, J.F., Michelsen, E.
2002-55 — $5.00

Building a Better Teenager: A Summary of 'What Works' in Youth Development (Research Brief)
Moore, K.A., Zaff, J.F.
2002-57 — $5.00

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